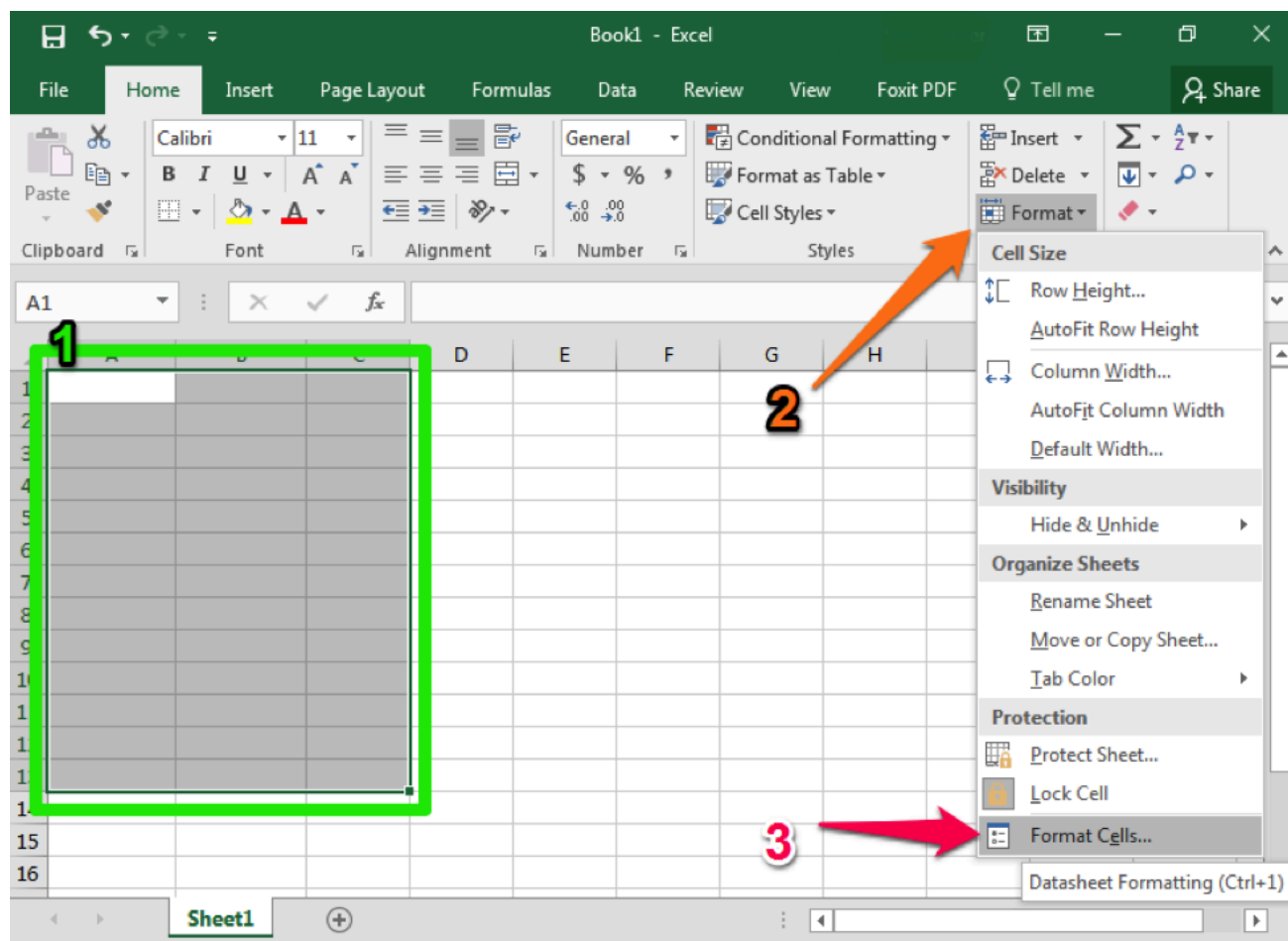Learning Outcomes

- Change cell format.

As mentioned previously, Excel will default to certain styles when you create a new worksheet. In particular, this includes the way that numbers are displayed and whether or not commas are automatically included. In this section, we will take a look at changing these defaults.

When you type numbers into an Excel workbook, it will often default to a specific format. For example, if you type "12/15/17," Excel will convert this to read "12/15/2017," assuming you were entering month, day, and abbreviated year. Similarly, "3/4" will display at "4-Mar," the fourth day of March. However, it is possible that you may have been entering fractions, so "3/4" was meant to indicate three-quarters instead.

If this is the case, you will need to format your cells to properly display the information you are entering. When possible, consider formatting your cells before you enter the data. Otherwise, Excel may convert some of the entries and you will need to re-enter that information.

Method 1

1. Begin by highlighting the cells you plan to use.
2. Select the Format dropdown from the Cells group of the ribbon.
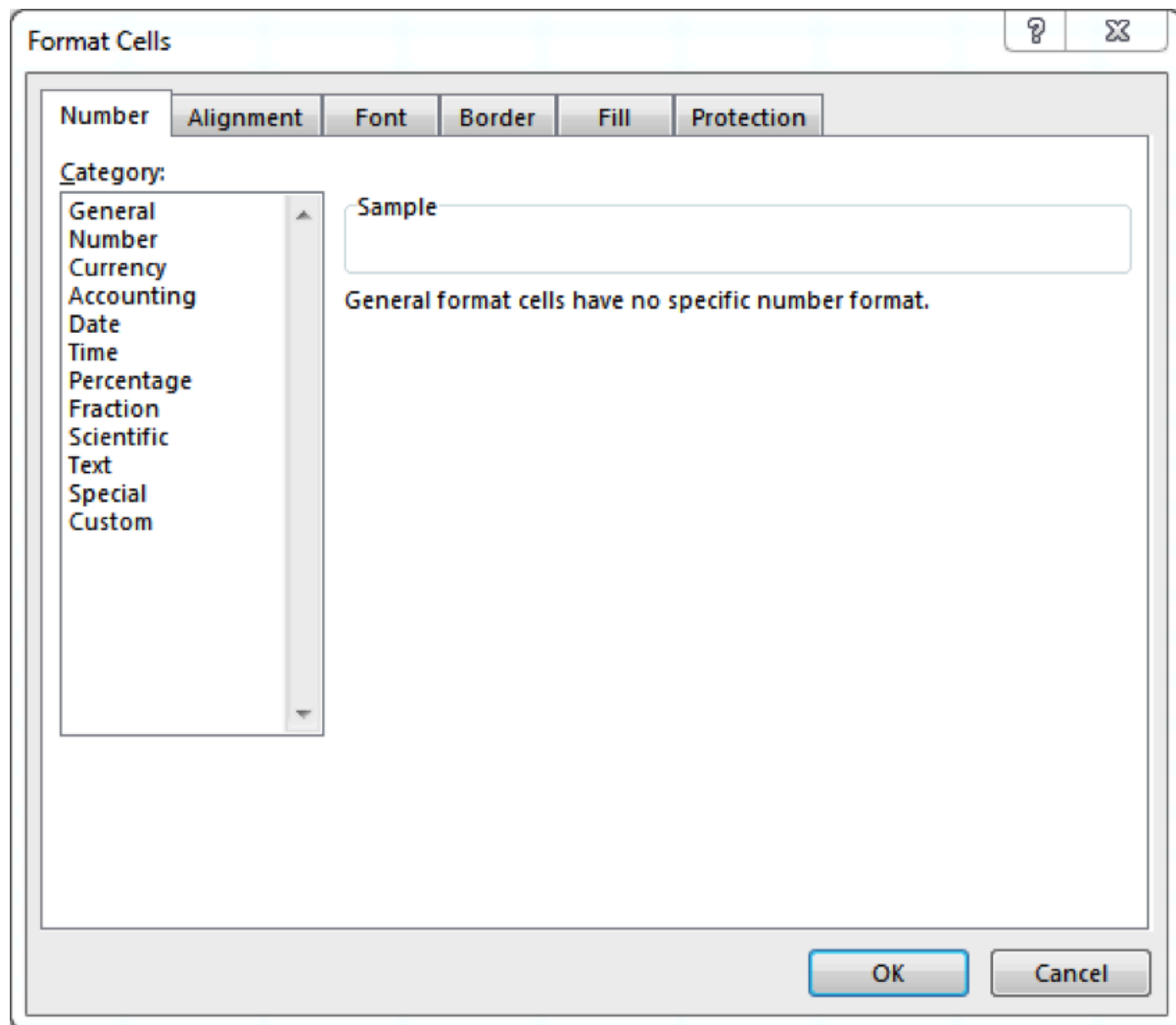3. Select the Format cells option at the bottom of the dropdown menu.

Practice question

Sally is entering fraction data into an Excel worksheet. What should she do before she begins typing her data into the worksheet?

○ Apply a cell style

See this interactive in the course material.

There are several available format options for cells in Excel. When you select one, Excel will provide you with a description and examples of how the information will display in the cells.

Format Cells

Number	Alignment	Font	Border	Fill	Protection

Category:

General
Number
Currency
Accounting
Date
Time
Percentage
Fraction
Scientific
Text
Special
Custom

Sample

General format cells have no specific number format.

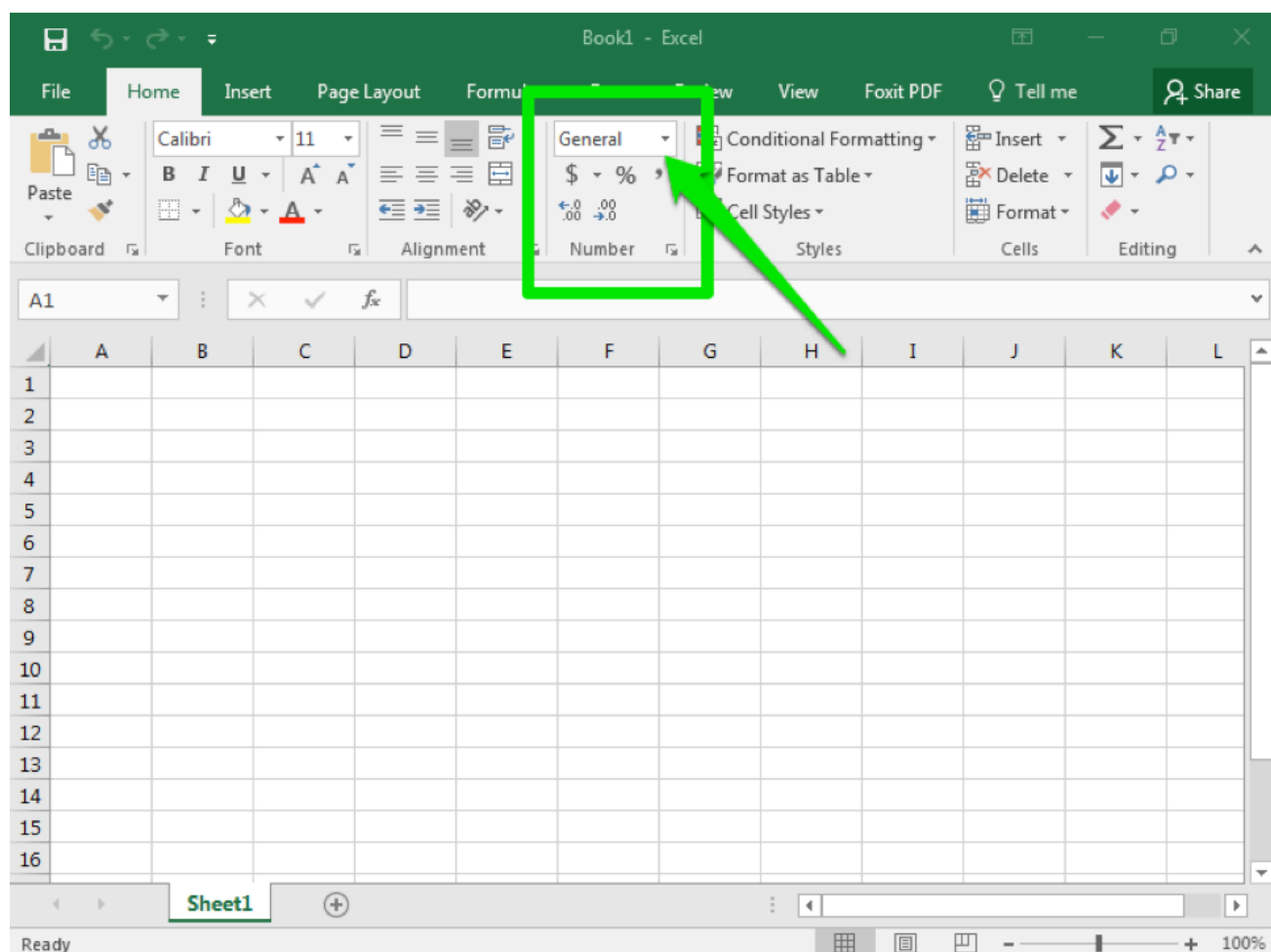OK   Cancel

Practice question

Marissa has to enter date information into Excel and wants the full date, including day of the week, to display. As she types she notices that only the numerical month/day/year is showing. What does she need to do?

○ Format the cells

Method 2

You can perform the same actions using the "Number" group in the ribbon. In this case, you simply select the cell format you wish to apply using the dropdown menu.

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